

VZCZCXRO8826
PP RUEH DU RUEHJO
DE RUEHTN #0232/01 3300726
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 250726Z NOV 08
FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2881
INFO RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 6238
RUEHJO/AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG 2054
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 3191

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CAPE TOWN 000232

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: U.S. ELECTION RESULTS COULD BRING NEW ERA TO USG-SAG
RELATIONS

REF: CAPETOWN 00224

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On November 5, 2008 the Consul general hosted an election party at her residence. After the confirmation of Barack Obama as President Elect, Professor Ben Turok, an ANC MP who was imprisoned with Mandela strolled into the CGR with a pronouncement that ANC Parliamentary members would now engage more with USG officials. In addition to Turok's promise that the ANC would work more closely with the USG, the presence of the Speaker of Parliament and three other ANC MPs at the CG's event, and invitations by ANC officials at a Cape Town Press Club event that same week, the CG believes these are changing times in the USG-SAG relationship. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The U.S. Presidential election results breakfast at the Consul General's was dubbed "the place to be" for that historic event. With more than 150 individuals in attendance, the sentiments and emotions were obvious. While the guest list was almost an exact duplication of the September 25 welcome reception for the newly arrived CG, the presence of ruling party members was much larger at the election event. At least five ANC Parliament members/party officials were in attendance at the breakfast compared to zero ANC MPs for the welcome reception. Even more important was the presence of the newly appointed Speaker of Parliament Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde. Mrs. Mahlangu-Nkabinde was first elected Deputy Speaker on April 23, 2004 and was elected to Speaker on September 25, 2008. She chairs the Disciplinary Committee of the National Assembly and is the former Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Committed to women's issues, at one stage Mrs. Mahlangu-Nkabinde served as Vice-President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) coordinating the Committee of Women Parliamentarians as well as an executive member of the IPU.

¶3. (SBU) The Speaker arrived early, engaged freely with other invitees and the press and showed genuine emotions at the results of the election of Barack Obama. More significant was her vision of peaceful transition of the democratic process. She was quoted in the local daily The Cape Argus saying, "This is a moment of change, not only for America, but for the whole world. We know that if there is change and hope in America then there can be hope for change in the whole world."

¶4. (SBU) In her private comments to the CG and other Consulate staff, the Speaker assured them a willingness to work with the Consulate staff in the future. Other ANC officials present included Sindi Shayi, Deputy Director-General of the Western Cape Education Department. Minority party MPs present included Shiela Camerer of the Democratic Alliance and Dr. Pheko Motsoko, leader of the Pan African Congress. Deputy Executive Mayor Grant Haskins, ACDP, a stalwart friend to the Consulate, also attended the party and the relationship was solidified by his presence at the election event.

¶5. (SBU) Toward the end of the morning, Professor Ben Turok entered the CGR with a request to be introduced to the new CG. Mr. Turok is a long term ANC member and supported Mandela during his trials and imprisonment. Turok has been a Member of Parliament in South Africa since 1995, representing the African National Congress. He was the founding Director of the Pan-African policy research Institute for African Alternatives (IFAA) in 1986 with centers in the UK, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Upon his

introduction, the CG welcomed him to the historic event. Asked if
Qintroduction, the CG welcomed him to the historic event. Asked if
he had heard the results, he indicated that the results were the
reason that he had come to the breakfast. Turok acknowledged that
relations had previously been strained between ANC and U.S.
officials. The last eight years with the current administration and
the war in Iraq made it an uncomfortable environment to work with
Americans, but said the election of Obama as President-elect is a
reason for change. Furthermore, he guaranteed that American
consulate staff would be provided access and assistance by ANC MPs.
With that message delivered in person, he summarily left the venue
without having as much as a cup of coffee or tea. Message
delivered.

U.S. Info Central Election Event

¶6. (SBU) On the afternoon of November 5, following the election
breakfast, the Consulate's Public Affairs Section hosted an election
results forum at the Central Library in downtown Cape Town. While
most of the 50 plus attendees were students, academicians and local
resident Americans, two ANC researchers were also in attendance.
They raised questions and exchanged views on the President-elect's
plans and the up-hill battle he will face. Upon their departure,
they asked for, and the PAS staff was astute enough to grant them
permission to take one of the very popular Obama full size cut outs
back to Parliament.

Press Club Event

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¶7. (SBU) Following a very successful trip to the USA, ANC President
Jacob Zuma returned to South Africa to face a split in his party and
potential challenges to his majority party in the upcoming spring
2009 national election. On a recruitment swing through the western
Province, Mr. Zuma was the featured speaker for the Press Club
breakfast on November 7 (reftel). Privately, Mr. Zuma raved to the
CG that the trip to the USA was wonderful. He also mentioned his
meeting with Jesse Jackson, noting the role he had played in U.S.
politics, and his meeting with senior American statesman Andrew
Young.

¶8. (SBU) In his initial comments to the Press Club, Mr. Zuma
publicly lauded the election of President-elect Obama, noting the
smooth transition of America's leadership. He went on to pledge
cooperation and anticipated improved relations between the USG and
the SAG.

¶9. (SBU) While at the breakfast, the Political officer met ANC MP
Francois Beukman, who Poloff is again meeting next week at a one on
one lunch. The CG met the newly appointed Deputy Minister for
Education Andre Gaum also an ANC MP and the ANC Chairperson for the
Western Cape Province Mcebisi Skwatsha. After weeks of unsuccessful
or non-responsive attempts to arrange a courtesy call with the top
party official in the Cape region, Mr. Skwatsha told the CG to call
his personal assistant to arrange a meeting and at this time the CG
is waiting for an appointment date.

¶10. (SBU) Comment. Increased access to Parliamentarians and other
ANC officials has already resulted in meetings being scheduled with
Consulate employees. It appears that change has come to South
Africa, at least as far as professional decorum in political
relations is concerned. End comment.